

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Karen Larimore Wilkinson, PIO
Public Information and Communications Manager
City of Salisbury, 217 S. Main Street
Salisbury, North Carolina 28144
Work Phone: 704-638-2113 Cell: 704-213-1050
Information: <http://www.salisburync.gov>
Work Email Contact: kwilk@salisburync.gov

Salisbury City Council Passes Youth Protection and Curfew Ordinance with 5-0 Vote

Council Provides Unanimous Support for Salisbury Police Department's Dedicated Efforts to Protect Local Youth

Salisbury, NC_June 18, 2009 – The City of Salisbury announces that Salisbury City Council has adopted an ordinance to protect juveniles, under the age of sixteen, from victimization and exposure to criminal activity. The ordinance amends Chapter 20: POLICE, of the Salisbury City Code, and adds a new section to the chapter entitled Article 4. The adoption came early during the Tuesday, June 16 council meeting and establishes a curfew for youth fifteen years and younger. Beginning July 1, 2009, it will be unlawful for juveniles under the age of sixteen to be in public places, without a parent or appointed guardian, between the hours of: 11 pm and 6 am, Sunday – Thursday, and from midnight-6 am on Friday and Saturday nights. The Youth Protection Ordinance is intended to reinforce the role of the parent in raising and guiding children and to encourage parents to be responsible for the whereabouts of their children.

Salisbury Mayor Susan Kluttz offers that she and her fellow council members have received positive feedback from the community in support of the ordinance and for the implementation of a curfew. Kluttz explains, "The goal of implementing the curfew is two-fold and strives to prevent juvenile crime while protecting youth from potential victimization. Our desire is to support the family unit and to create a safer community for all through constructive youth intervention." The Mayor shares that over 500 citizens attended the Salisbury-Rowan United Positive Youth Summit in June 2007 to share ideas and suggestions for providing a positive future for local youth. "Feedback from summit attendees and our citizens has consistently supported the implementation of a curfew with authorization for our police department to enforce. The Youth Protection and Curfew Ordinance will allow our officers to intervene and take necessary action to protect our local youth and to prevent serious trouble from occurring in the late hours. We believe that this ordinance is a powerful tool that will prove immensely supportive in protecting the community, our citizens, and for creating a positive outlook for our youth. We will take any and all steps to do whatever is necessary to protect the City's children."

The adoption followed a brief presentation by Police Chief Mark Wilhelm, recapping the draft ordinance previously presented for Council review. A public hearing and council discussion were followed by a unanimous vote for adoption of the ordinance. Chief Wilhelm explains that the "curfew ordinance provides numerous exceptions for youth who are traveling to and from school, and religious and civic-sponsored events. In addition, youth traveling to places of employment or responding to emergencies are excluded. The ordinance was not adopted to inhibit positive youth activity or activity that

is being supervised properly.” The Chief further notes that the Youth Protection and Curfew Ordinance “places the responsibility of juvenile action with the parent or guardian. Parents are expected to have concern and knowledge for their children’s whereabouts and the safety of their children should be as important to the parents as it is to us.”

Before taking action, Salisbury Police Officers will approach the apparent offender and obtain the youth’s age and reason for being in the public place or establishment during restricted hours. Should the officer believe that an offense has occurred, a juvenile contact report or complaint will be filed, and the juvenile will be removed from the area and taken into custody. Juvenile violators will be subject to referral by complaint to the Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. The youth’s parent or guardian will be contacted immediately and required to meet with the officer. The police officer may release the youth violator into the hands of a parent or guardian only. Parents or guardians refusing to take custody of their children will be in violation of the City of Salisbury code and subject to an additional fine.

The owner, operator, or any employee of a public or private establishment that allows juveniles to remain on the premises during restricted hours will be in direct violation of the Youth Protection and Curfew Ordinance. Wilhelm informs that “to defend their establishment from violation and potential fines, establishments should request that youth dismiss from the property prior to the onset of curfew restricted hours. If youth refuse to leave the premises, proprietors should take steps to protect themselves from violation of the City of Salisbury Code. Establishments may contact the Salisbury Police Department at 704-638-5333 and request that youth be removed from their property.” Adult violators and parents or guardians of youth violators may be found guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to a fine of up to \$100 at the discretion of a District Court Judge.

The Youth Protection and Curfew Ordinance describes public or private places such as streets, sidewalks, highways, alleys, rights of ways, public vehicular areas and parking lots, transportation facilities, theaters, restaurants, shops, and bowling alleys. Schools and school grounds, places of business and amusement, playgrounds, and parks are also included. Any similar areas open to the public are covered under the newly adopted code as well as common areas open to or accessible to the public. The definition of public places is inclusive of, but not limited to those areas outlined in the ordinance.

Wilhelm explains that the City’s ordinance is a culmination of dedicated research into adopted child protection ordinances from across the state of North Carolina. “Ordinances which have proven successful, within similar-size municipalities, assisted our department with the creation of the newly adopted ordinance. Salisbury’s Youth Protection and Curfew Ordinance clearly states that the intention is ‘to hold neglectful or careless parents up to a reasonable community standard of parental responsibility through an objective test’ and a parent’s indifference to their child’s activity will not be accepted as a reasonable defense.” Police Chief Wilhelm shares that a full-scale communications effort is underway to inform parents, juveniles, and establishment owners and operators of the consequences involved with violation of the new ordinance. “We are working under official authorization of our Salisbury City Council. Their directive is to take any and all approved steps to protect the citizens and youth of our community.”

For a copy of the adopted Youth Protection and Curfew Ordinance, citizens may visit the Salisbury Police Department at 130 E. Liberty Street and request a printed copy at the front counter. In addition, an online, printable version of the ordinance is available by visiting the City of Salisbury website at www.salisburync.gov and clicking on the link entitled Youth Protection and Curfew Ordinance, under the heading of Highlights. The City of Salisbury is an equal opportunity employer with over 180 different job classifications and 400 full time positions. For more information regarding the City of Salisbury and its services and departments, please visit us on the World Wide Web at www.salisburync.gov. For more information regarding the Salisbury Police Department, please call 704-638-5333 or visit the department online at www.salisburyncpd.org .

###